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S E C R E T TUNIS 001109

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESSES FM ABDALLAH ON DEMOCRACY

REF: A. SECTO 8
[1](#)B. TUNIS 650

Classified By: Ambassador Robert F. Godec, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) In a one-on-one meeting on October 18, the Ambassador raised with Foreign Minister Abdallah the importance of further progress on democracy in Tunisia. The Ambassador noted the Secretary's remarks on the subject to President Ben Ali in early September (ref. A) and his request for specific areas where progress is needed. The Ambassador also observed that he had provided a non-paper on freedom of expression to the Minister in June (ref. B), stressing the United States welcomed the GOT's decision to remove the blocks it had placed on the Amnesty International and Facebook websites. The Ambassador then offered to provide the Minister with a list of steps the GOT might consider to advance democracy.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) The Minister said he welcomed the US non-paper and accepted it. He pointed out that Tunisia had on October 17 met with representatives of the European Union for their second, annual discussion of democracy and human rights. He said the meeting had gone well (further details from the EU will be provided septel). The FM asked that the US Government publicly welcome progress the GOT makes on democracy. The Ambassador indicated that when there is progress, the United States is prepared to welcome it publicly.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Comment. The run up to the 2009 election in Tunisia provides an opportunity for the US Government to remind the GOT of the importance of further progress on democracy. Building on the Secretary's recent meeting with President Ben Ali, our non-paper lays out concrete steps the GOT might take to advance political freedoms. We have sent the non-paper to NEA/MAG by e-mail and encourage Washington officials to draw from it, when appropriate, when meeting with GOT officials. End comment.
GODEC